

UNCLASSIFIED

SK31

Boudreau, Paul E

To: Burger, David
Subject: RE: New Republic 12/12/2005 Forsyth article on Secretary's EUR trip

RELEASED IN FULL

From: Orlansky, Michael D
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2005 6:12 PM
To: Milovanovic, Gillian A; Wohlers, Paul; Hubler, Stephen A
Subject: New Republic 12/12/2005 Forsyth article on Secretary's EUR trip

FYI if you have not yet seen. Now that the "on vacation in Macedonia" phrase is out there, it is being picked up widely by media, and has now made it into the New Republic. It is a generally positive assessment of the Secretary's recent visit to Europe.

Mike

CONDOLEEZZA RICE'S FINEST HOUR

Damage Control

12/12/2005

New Republic

James Forsyth

It was a quick turnaround even by the standards of the 24-hour news cycle. Last Monday, The New York Times reported on Condoleezza Rice's "rock star status." But by Wednesday, a Times headline blared "Skepticism Seems to Erode Europeans' Faith in Rice." The cause of this reversal? Rice's arrival in Europe amidst an ongoing dispute over whether the United States has been torturing terrorist suspects in Eastern Europe, plus allegations from a Lebanese-born German national who claims he was abducted by the United States while on vacation in Macedonia, taken to Afghanistan, and held in appalling conditions for several months. According to The Washington Post, more than three-quarters of the questions Rice was asked by reporters during her European visit concerned the detainee issue.

In other words, the week had all the makings of a disaster for the secretary of state. And yet the trip was far from disastrous. Rice and European foreign ministers agreed to an increased NATO role in Afghanistan, with 6,000 more troops to be deployed to the south of the country. By week's end, Rice even seemed to have placated European leaders on detainees. German Chancellor Angela Merkel told a joint press conference that the "information she provided me with here today is good information, valuable information for the German people." The Dutch foreign minister, who began the week by criticizing Rice, ended it by proclaiming himself "very satisfied." Belgium, which has vocally opposed Bush's foreign policy, also had supportive words for Rice. Even the French foreign minister pointed out that Rice had made clear the United States did not violate international law on torture and inhumane treatment. Meanwhile, notably absent were the kinds of mass anti-American demonstrations that roiled the continent back in 2003. What could have been Rice's worst week since becoming secretary of state ended as perhaps her finest hour. And the reason she pulled it off was simple: Condoleezza Rice is a uniquely effective representative of American values and interests in Europe.

If President Bush, Dick Cheney, or Donald Rumsfeld had gone to Europe to explain America's policy on torture,
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER
DATE/CASE ID: 28 JAN 2009 200706444

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

the outcome would surely have been worse. Each man, rightly or wrongly, fits easily into one or another predetermined European narrative about Americans: that they are dumb, naive, primitive, religious, racist, arrogant, or greedy. Rice neutralizes all these lines of attack.

For starters, it is hard to accuse a woman who was the provost of a university superior to any in continental Europe of being dumb. It is also hard to accuse someone who grew up in the segregated South of naivete about how easy it is to build a multiethnic democracy, a favorite charge of Europeans who oppose Bush's Iraq policy. Rice is particularly effective at invoking the civil-rights struggles of her childhood to argue for Bush's democratization push in the Middle East. In October, she told the BBC:

The United States has had a particularly long journey, given our heritage of slavery, but indeed we have made enormous progress, and of course, we continue to have problems of poverty and some that are linked to poverty and race. But I would stand and ask anyone whether they think that the United States of America has made a little progress on the racial front. Of course we've made enormous progress on the racial front and that is an important lesson to countries that are just beginning their struggle for multiethnic democracy.

Europeans are fond of criticizing Americans for being overly religious-and therefore primitive. The British novelist Martin Amis opined in 2003 that "we are obliged to accept the fact that Bush is more religious than Saddam: of the two presidents, he is, in this respect, the more psychologically primitive." Rice may be more religious than the average European; but on religious issues, she likely gets a pass from many Europeans, who are more apt to associate African-American faith with Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement than with opposition to the teaching of evolution in schools. Even the most fervent European atheist would find it hard to mock the faith of someone who lost a friend in a racist church bombing.

European critics of America also love to imagine the United States as a racist society where Jim Crow never really died; hence the gleeful nature of some of the European coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. (The Guardian's Gary Younge, for instance, defended Kanye West's infamous outburst that "George Bush doesn't care about black people," arguing that "West's comments expressed a blatant truth for all with eyes to see.") But Rice challenges this assumption-indeed, Europeans are all too aware that there is no minority woman approaching Rice's political importance on their continent.

It is also hard to depict Rice as a bully. She does not derisively lecture her European critics as Rumsfeld famously did during the run-up to the Iraq war. She also eschews the doom laden, and slightly menacing, tone that Cheney often employs. Last week, even when hitting back against charges aimed at the United States, Rice stressed the importance of cooperation. "We share intelligence that has helped protect European countries from attack, helping save European lives," she said. Unlike Bush, Rumsfeld, and Cheney, Rice acknowledges that America makes mistakes, defanging allegations of American arrogance. On Thursday she told Europeans that further abuses were "entirely possible" and that "Just because you're a democracy it doesn't mean that you're perfect."

Finally, Rice avoids the charge of crony capitalism that Europeans love to level against other Bush appointees. It sometimes seems as if every European news story on Cheney includes an obligatory reference to Halliburton. Yet it is relatively rare to see mentioned that Rice once had a Chevron oil tanker named after her. (A quick search of The Guardian website gets 266 results for "Cheney" and "Halliburton" and only 10 for "Rice" and "Chevron.") Rice's race also makes it far harder to associate her with what Europeans perceive as the worst excesses of American capitalism.

Europeans' affinity for Rice has never served America quite as well as it did last week. To be sure, the flap over torture has undoubtedly harmed America's image in Europe. And with Poland launching an inquiry into the issue, it seems unlikely to go away anytime soon. But the fact that it was Rice who went to Europe certainly limited the damage. Europe's leaders and their constituents still appear to trust her-at least as much as they will

UNCLASSIFIED²

UNCLASSIFIED

ever trust an American politician. (At Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday, Blair invoked Rice's name at every opportunity in an attempt to close down the issue.) For Rice, there will probably be other trips more like her February tour when she was feted across the continent. But few visits to Europe will be as important as this one; and few will provide as compelling evidence of just how much Europeans like her. A rock star, indeed.

This message and attachments, if any, are **Unclassified** according to E.O. 12958

UNCLASSIFIED³